

**Washington State Human Rights Commission
MEETING OF
May 19, 2005**

**Gonzaga Law School
Spokane, WA**

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

Commissioners: J. Reiko Callner, Commission Chair; Dallas Barnes; Deborah Sioux Cano-Lee; and Jerry Hebert. A quorum was present.

Staff: Marc Brenman, Executive Director; Tanya Calahan, Executive Assistant to the Commissioners; Sharon Ortiz, Operations Manager; Bruce Redding, Equal Opportunity Compliance Specialist; Gary Lewis, Kim Griffin-Pierce, and Heidi Silver, Equal Opportunity Compliance Investigators, and Traci Friedl, Assistant Attorney General.

Guests: NAACP Chair V. Anne Smith; Cristina Mitman of the Northwest Fair Housing Alliance; Frank Coyle, Hate Incident Response Team of Spokane; Kiondra Bullock; Chepa Knows His Gun; Kitera McClure; Bonnie Joseph; Sheila Olajoyegbe; Virla Spence; Kathy Costner; Sherrie Cleveland; Ashley Murphy; Lilly Hugerford; Bethen Bray, US Attorney James McDevitt; Jan and Jenny Polek, Ruth Silverthorne, Garrett Daggett; Marianne Dawson; Fran Hammond; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Baptiste; Amani El-Alayli; Early Hill; Yvonne Montoya; and Marcus Lehmann. Other individuals attended the forum but did not sign in.

(Audio tape one – side one to Audio tape two – side two)

OPENING AND WELCOME

Commissioner Callner called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. She welcomed everyone and acknowledged former Commissioner and Chairperson Charlotte Coker, who was in the audience. She also introduced the other Commissioners and staff in attendance.

OPEN FORUM

Many individuals were pre-designated speakers at the forum.

United States Attorney James McDevitt spoke first. He welcomed everyone to Spokane on behalf of the United States Department of Justice and the community. He spoke of human

trafficking, which is a huge problem in Eastern Washington. He also spoke about hate crimes and post 9-11 outreach.

Executive Director Marc Brenman next spoke about equity in education issues and the disparate impact of the Washington Assessment and Learning Exam (WASL) on African Americans and limited English speaking individuals.

During the community testimony portion of the forum, the following other individuals spoke: NAACP Chair V. Anne Smith; Cristina Mitman of the Northwest Fair Housing Alliance, Frank Coyle, Hate Incident Response Team of Spokane, Kiondra Bullock; Chepa Knows His Gun, Kitera McClure, Bonnie Joseph, Sheila Olajoyegbe, Virla Spence, Gary Lewis, Kathy Costner, Sherrie Cleveland, Ashley Murphy, Lilly Hugerford, and Bethen Bray.

Many of the individuals that spoke expressed deep concern regarding Spokane School District #81. Parents testified regarding harassment and lack of support from the principals, teachers, and school board in addressing racism in Spokane #81 schools. Some commented about the prevalent use of the “n” word in the schools and how officials have categorized the use of the term as “free speech.”

Many expressed concern about how their children have been, teased, bullied, and unfairly disciplined by school officials because of their race.

Commission staff Investigator Gary Lewis spoke about his experience in Coeur d’Alene with his children. His two sons have experienced difficulties in the Coeur d’Alene School District because of their race. The text books used in those schools have false information regarding Black History. He is working with others to address these systemic problems in the schools. He then spoke about cultural competency and the need for school districts to be culturally competent.

Individuals from the disability community spoke as well and offered their services.

Commissioner Callner thanked the audience members and participants for coming to the forum. The forum is an important first step in getting community dialogue going on the issues brought forth.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tanya Y. Calahan
Executive Assistant to the Commissioners